



Michigan Association of
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH
Boards

Testimony before the House Health Policy Committee
December 13, 2007

Representative Angerer and Members of the Committee:

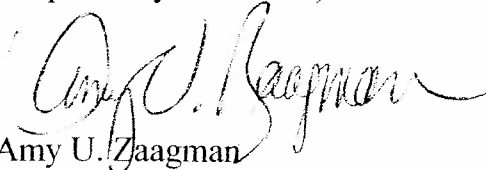
My name is Amy Zaagman. I am associate director of the Michigan Association of CMH Boards. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on House Bills 5527 & 5529 sponsored by the Chair and Representative Ball.

I would like to come before you this morning and tell you that we support these bills, because we do advocate ending the discrimination in insurance coverage for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. However, the concept of these bills is flawed. Autism spectrum disorder is a brain disorder just like schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorders, anxiety and panic disorders and others. The Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards, as an active member of the Michigan Partners for Parity, wants **all** brain disorders to be covered by insurance policies in the same manner as any other illness, with equal co-pays, visit and dollar limits.

We respectfully request if the members of this committee are moved to act by the unfair treatment of individuals and families dealing with autism, that you work with your colleagues in the House Insurance Committee and House Leadership to move comprehensive mental health parity bills. If enacted, HB's 4390-4393 would cover all brain disorders including autism. For years opponents have successfully killed similar bills using arguments that Partners for Parity has consistently debunked with facts and figures based on actual experience, but still Michigan remains one of only 8 states in the nation without mental health parity.

As you have seen today, discrimination in the coverage for brain disorders has faces and names and it affects real lives every day. The Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards and the Michigan Partners for Parity want to end the discrimination of **all** individuals with brain disorders in the State of Michigan and we need your help.

Respectfully submitted,


Amy U. Zaagman
Associate Director